

# A report from your Legislature

## State Representative **David Simpson**



### **Committee assignments:**

- Local Government, *vice chair*
- Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
- Financial Institutions & Insurance

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## **2004 SESSION REVIEW**

Spring 2004

**Dear Fellow Citizen:**

**I'm very honored to send this review of the 2004 Legislative Session!**

We finished our work on time a few weeks ago. This was my first session, but I believe I hit the ground running and got some good things done in Olympia.

An ambitious agenda confronted us when we started in January. The theme of every item on our legislative calendar is our work toward ensuring a dependable economy, commendable schools, and affordable health care. These are the issues that matter most for Washington's communities and neighborhoods.

**Your comments and suggestions are always more than welcome!**

**Sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Simpson".

**David Simpson**  
State Representative  
38th Legislative District



## **Please meet my new Legislative Assistant**

**I'm proud to welcome Andrew Smith, my new Legislative Assistant, to our 38th Legislative District team!**

Andrew was raised in John Steinbeck's Salinas, California, country. He attended the University of Puget Sound, where he graduated with degrees in International Political Economics and Asian Cultural Studies. Andrew is a classically trained violinist, an experienced martial artist, a novice scuba diver, and an egregious surfer. On the weekends, he tutors middle-school students in math, reading-comprehension, and chess.

Andrew's previous Washington state-capital experience includes stints as a policy intern in the House, and as a session aide in the Senate.

## ◆ Budget:

### It seems to me that this job means working for *real people*

Snohomish County citizens are no different than people anywhere else. We're as independent as anyone else, and we have every right to count on at least a few things in life – a few *very big* things.

We want jobs to outlast the eccentricities of Wall Street, schools to prepare our kids for a productive future, and health-care policies to take care of any medical issues that come up. We're *real people*. And we're proud of it.

We approved a supplemental budget that includes provisions with which real people can identify:

- Children's health-insurance premiums are eliminated for Medicaid families earning less than 150 percent of the poverty level.
- Our schools will receive additional funding to strengthen their students' math and science skills, which are so necessary for 21st-century careers!
- More young people will have an opportunity to pursue a higher education.
- Incentives are provided for businesses in high-tech industries so more of our citizens can get back to work in a good job.

### ◆ All budgets are 'local'

I was proud to vote for a budget that takes care of as many social-service responsibilities as we can afford – and yet still keeps a healthy reserve *without* hiking any taxes.

But let me say a few things now about a *relatively* small part (\$50,000) of the budget. This is a budget-provision that involves a new clinic in Everett.

**Key services are provided at the Providence Everett Healthcare Clinic – our newest local clinic. They are seeing thousands of Everett and other Snohomish County citizens in their first year.** This new budget money will be so important to help the essential clinic-work for many families. Folks who come into the clinic are young people, older people, and in-between people who might not get medical attention if it weren't for the clinic.

**Last year, emergency rooms at Providence Everett Medical Center saw just under 100,000 patients. That's well over 250 people every day who needed medical attention!** A significant percentage of these patients were there for nonemergency care they *couldn't get elsewhere*.

## ◆ Transportation:

### Freeway work is needed, especially for 2010 Olympics

The sooner we get busy on improving our transportation system and other parts of our infrastructure, the better.

We also passed a supplemental transportation budget including money to speed up much-needed work on Interstate 5 in our Everett area. More work on the car-pool lane is important for our region. This four-year project could start next year.

As our neighbors in British Columbia get ready to host the Winter Olympics in 2010, we've got our own preparations to make.

Thousands of motorists will come through our state on the way to and from Canada. We've got to shape up our transportation system to handle this extra load.



**Our region of Interstate 5 is already a mess a lot of the time as it is.**

**What's it going to be like in six years with the Olympics if we don't get busy and make improvements today? People in Olympia are finally getting the message that we need more work on our freeway system in Snohomish County.**

The transportation budget funds the major transportation agencies in our state — including the Department of Transportation itself, as well as the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, the County Road Administration Board, the Transportation Improvement Board, the Washington State Patrol, and the Department of Licensing.

### ◆ State parks:

#### Keeping watch on our most treasured resource

**With our state parks growing more popular every year, I want to make sure these facilities reflect the interests of our citizens.**

Terms of a successful bill — which I sponsored in the House of Representatives — will establish a state park centennial committee to find the best way to implement the Centennial 2013 Plan.

We've got to make sure our parks keep up with the changing needs and interests of citizens. State parks are certainly our most popular public resource. We need to take care of these facilities for citizens today — as well as for future generations.

In 1913, the Legislature established the Washington State Board of Parks Commissioners. That marks the birth of our state-parks system. Today, there are more than 100 state-park locations in Washington. Our Parks and Recreation Commission has developed the Centennial 2013 Plan to guide the system toward its 100th birthday in nine years.

**It's a privilege to serve on the House Fisheries, Ecology & Parks Committee in which this new state policy has been discussed at length.**



### ◆ Veterans:

#### Respect due for citizens who protected our country

**Here's a classic "Bad news/Good news" story:**

Another measure I prime-sponsored — which would have ensured that disabled veterans aren't saddled with property taxes on their vehicles — didn't quite get all the way through the process this year. That's the bad news, of course.

But the good news is that a similar measure in the Senate did pass and has been signed by the governor! The plan in this bill is to see to it that disabled veterans are exempt from paying a property tax on their vehicles.

These men and women put themselves in harm's way for our freedom — and all too many paid a horrible price for it.

We need to guarantee that a disabled veteran who has exempt license plates doesn't have to pay a property tax on his or her vehicle.

### ◆ Insurance:

#### Consumers deserve to have access to complete information

**Better protection for insurance consumers is emphasized in legislation I prime-sponsored in this year's legislative session.**

I want to protect our citizens from unfair insurance practices.

Terms of the bill say that if an insurance company wants to use your credit-history to set coverage and premiums, the company must be prepared to justify such a practice.

An insurance company that uses credit history or an insurance score to determine rates, premiums, or eligibility for coverage must file all rates and rating plans with the insurance commissioner. And this information must be open for citizens to review.

Why shouldn't every insurance company be held accountable for decisions on coverage and premiums? It just makes good common sense.

A "credit score" is the number that insurance companies assign to consumers. The score is based on the consumer's credit experiences — such as bill-paying history, the number and type of accounts, late payments, collection actions, outstanding debt, and the length of time the consumer has had the accounts.

Credit scores may differ from one company to the next because each company weighs credit-factors differently.

**I'm honored to have a seat on the House Financial Institutions & Insurance Committee in which this legislation was originally considered.**

## ◆ Disappointments:

### We did leave some work to do in the next Legislature

- **It's only right: People who try to escape the long arm of the law should serve a longer sentence.**

I prime-sponsored a bill, which unfortunately didn't go all the way through the process this year, to help make sure people feel safe in their homes and communities. We need to tell wrongdoers that crime not only doesn't pay – it *costs*.

My bill says that people who try to elude a police officer would face more time behind bars. This could send a first-time offender to jail up to nine months, for example, instead of the current maximum of two months.

- **Earlier this year, a report from the governor's office touched off a firestorm of debate regarding the tens of millions of dollars in state-agency contracts that go to companies outside the United States.**

Many members of the House — including yours truly — want thorough information about the extent of this practice, which is called offshoring. At the very least, members of our House Democratic Caucus want to set up a task force to get to the bottom of the offshoring of Washington's taxpayer dollars!

By a vote of 64-31, the legislation passed the House. But unfortunately, the Senate Republican leadership refused to even take a vote on the bill.

- **Another bill that the House passed — but the Senate let die — was a plan aimed at making prescription drugs more affordable for Washington people.**

Terms of this legislation would make it legal to buy prescription drugs from Canada. Equal-quality medicine costs a lot less up there than it does in our state — or anywhere else in our country, for that matter. Consider this: Every year, the state of Washington spends about a half-a-billion dollars on very needed prescription drugs. This expenditure goes to help low-income families who couldn't afford their prescribed medicine otherwise.